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THE SWASTIKA. The Earliest-known Symbol and its Migrations. With Observations on the Migration of Certain Industries in Prehistoric Times. By THOMAS WILSON, Curator. (Report of the U. S. National Museum for 1894. Pp. 1011, 757, plates 1-25, figures 1-374. Washington: Government Printing Office. 1896.

The wide subject respecting which Professor Wilson has brought together a mass of information and many useful illustrations is only on the verge of the field with which this Journal can be concerned. It will therefore be possible only to notice his discussion, in which is brought together information from many quarters. The swastika is defined as the result of bending at right angles, in the same direction, an equal-armed cross. The Sanscrit name signifies "well-being;" and in India the figure is now, as it has been from time immemorial, a sign of prosperity in sacred use. An interesting piece of information obtained by the author from a Hindu informant shows the employment of the sign among the Jains, with whom the emblem has a special form, the bent arms being slightly curved and pointed. By these, the emblem is drawn with the finger on rice or meal spread over a circle, the parts being made according to a fixed rule (p. 805). On the walls of Buddhist cave-temples swastikas are found in great numbers. Considering the known relation of Indian usage to the countries of the extreme Orient, it is only natural that the sign should be in vogue, with corresponding significance, in China, Japan, and Thibet. Professor Wilson passes to consider the classical Orient, Africa, and the classical Occident. Here the case is quite different; for, although the sign almost everywhere occurs, appearing in eastern Asia and Europe during the bronze age, in ancient Troy on early Greek vases, etc., there is no testimony to show the meaning conveyed, nor how far, as in India, the figure was in use in daily worship.

Passing to America, a bent cross is a very common motive of decoration on pottery, in weaving, etc. As to the particular significance of the figure, it appears from a statement of Miss Mary A. Owen (p. 895) that among Kansas Indians it is used as lucky sign by sun-worshippers. The question as to the ultimate origin or origins of the swastika, and associated forms of the equal-armed cross, involve very difficult problems, and a mass of conjectures have been made, which are noted by Professor Wilson. Dr. J. Owen Dorsey observed that among Kansas Indians a cross with arms bent at the end figures as a sign of wind-songs; and Capt. John G. Bourke found that among the Apache the cross is related to the four winds. As to the very doubtful theories of migration, Professor Wilson believes the evidence sufficient to show that the American symbol is an imported sign; but this judgment will not find general concurrence. In this case, as in other inquiries, distinct information with regard to the exact idea conveyed to the minds of different American tribes by the symbol or figure of the bent cross would be a useful addition to knowledge. It is not at all clear that, in the extended early European use of the sign, there existed any religious significance analogous to that of India; and for this reason the word "swastika" seems rather misleading.

W. W. N.